



COMMITTEE ON

**SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY**

REPUBLICANS Frank Lucas, Ranking Member

## **Opening Statement of Ranking Member Frank Lucas**

*Examining R&D Pathways to Sustainable Aviation*

*March 24, 2021*

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Thank you for holding this hearing, Mr. Chairman.

Oklahoma is no stranger to being on the cutting edge of aviation. From daring test pilots such as Tom Stafford and Gordo Cooper to other pioneering aviators like Jerrie Cobb, Oklahoma is well represented by those who pushed the boundaries of flight. To this very day, Oklahoma's connection to aviation remains strong as the home of Tinker Air Force Base and FAA's Michael Monroney Aeronautical Center.

The aviation industry is a vital part of our nation's economy. It contributes \$1.8 trillion annually to the economy and is directly or indirectly responsible for more than 10 million jobs. The Science Committee has jurisdiction over several areas of federal aviation research, ranging from our drafting the research title of each FAA reauthorization to our oversight of NASA's aeronautics research mission directorate. The research carried out by NASA and FAA is then utilized by industry partners who integrate this knowledge into their existing fleets.

Global air travel generates an estimated 2-3 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions. While we saw a reduction in the number of flights in the last year, and a corresponding decrease in emissions, we know that these numbers will eventually rebound and increase. One estimate is that there will be roughly 10 billion passengers flying more than 12 trillion miles annually by 2050.

Today's hearing comes two weeks after we held a full committee hearing on the science of climate change. As that hearing made clear, we should focus on investing in research and development efforts, including R&D to give the aviation industry the tools they need to reduce emissions from flight. What we shouldn't do is allow ourselves to be subject to burdensome and unequal international mandates at the expense of our economic growth.

The good news is that the aviation industry is already making progress in reducing emissions. Multiple domestic and international aircraft manufacturers have already made commitments to voluntarily reducing emissions. We will also hear today about how the research community and industry are teaming up to create innovative new ways to reduce emissions.

For instance, we can help reduce emissions by researching new aircraft designs and the use of lighter materials to help reduce aircraft weight. Additionally, research is ongoing about the use of a variety of farm-produced commodities which could be blended into existing fuels and potentially reduce emissions.

I thank our witnesses for being here today and look forward to a productive discussion about we can support research and development efforts which will assist our aviation industry in the years to come.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back.